

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR EI

SUBJECT: JACK LYNCH CAUTIOUS ON NORTHERN IRELAND

1. IN HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE SINCE TAKING OFFICE, IRISH PRIME MINISTER JACK LYNCH TOOK A CAUTIOUS AND SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS STANCE ON NORTHERN IRELAND. WHILE REITERATING HIS PARTY DOCUMENTINE THAT HE WOULD URGE THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MIGHT DECLARE ITS INTEREST IN THE ULTIMATE UNIFICATION OF IRELAND, AND THAT IT MIGHT TAKE SOME SPECIFIC STEPS IN THAT DIRECTION, HE WOULD NOT INCLUDE AS ONE OF THOSE STEPS A DECLARATION OF INTENT TO WITHDRAW. HE SAID THAT HE HAD ALREADY CONTACTED THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR CONCERNING AN EARLY MEETING WITH CALLAGHAN. CONCERNING TWO ACTS WHICH FIANNA FAIL OPPOSED WHILE IN OPPOSITION, THE CRIMINAL LAW (JURISDICTION) ACT AND THE EMERGENCY POWERS ACT, LYNCH WAS AGAIN CAUTIOUS, MERELY SAYING THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT THEM. LYNCH SAID THAT HE INTENDED TO PERSONALLY SUPERVISE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICY AND PERHAPS WOULD APPOINT A PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE IN THAT AREA SINCE THE FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD BE TOO BUSY WITH EC AND OTHER AFFAIRS.

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2. OTHER ITEMS TOUCHED UPON IN THE PRESS CONFERENCE:

- CONTRACEPTION. HE SAID THAT THIS WOULD NOT BE A HIGH PRIORITY ITEM, BUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PREPARE LEGISLATION. HIS OWN VIEW IS THAT CONTRACEPTIVES SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE ONLY TO MARRIED COUPLES AND UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE HEALTH

BOARDS.

- GRANTS FOR HOME PURCHASES AND ELIMINATION OF AUTO TAX. HE SAID THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE TWO CAMPAIGN PROMISES WAS ALREADY STARTED.

- POLICE BRUTALITY. THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE WOULD LOOK INTO THE MATTER. LYNCH SAID THAT FIANNA FAIL WAS WELL DISPOSED TOWARD AN INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS COMMISSION.

- EDUCATION. HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE A PILOT SCHEME FOR INTEGRATED EDUCATION (I.E. RELIGIOUSLY INTEGRATED), BUT ONLY IF A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF PARENTS IS INTERESTED.

- AGRICULTURE. IN THIS POLITICALLY SENSITIVE AREA NEW FINANCE MINISTER COLLEY, WHO SHARED THE PLATFORM WITH LYNCH, STRUCK TO THE FIANNA FAIL ELECTION PLATFORM, WHICH IN EFFECT WOULD MAINTAIN THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF TAXATION FOR FARMERS. HOWEVER, AGAIN THE POSITION WAS THOROUGHLY QUALIFIED AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS ROOM TO MANOUEVER.

3. COMMENT: SOME OF THE BRITISH MEDIA, INCLUDING BBC, SEEM TO HAVE MISINTERPRETED LYNCH'S ANSWERS ON NORTHERN IRELAND.
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HE WAS ENGAGING IN TYPICAL QUOTE LYNCH-SPEAK UNQUOTE (AN IRISH TIMES PHRASE) AND DELIBERATELY ATTEMPTING TO ACHIEVE AMBIGUITY. THE BRITISH MEDIA HAVE TAKEN SEVERAL STATEMENTS OUT OF CONTEXT, NOT NOTING THE HEAVY QUALIFICATIONS, AND GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT LYNCH HAS PUT HIS GOVERNMENT ONTO SOME KIND OF COLLISION COURSE WITH HMG. WE INTERPRET THE STATEMENTS TAKEN AS A WHOLE, ON THE CONTRARY, TO INDICATE THAT LYNCH IS QUIETLY BACKING OFF FROM SOME OF THE MORE ABRASIVE POSITIONS TAKEN BY FIANNA FAIL WHEN IT WAS IN OPPOSITION, E.G. A DEMAND FOR A BRITISH STATEMENT OF INTENT TO WITHDRAW. THE PRESS CONFERENCE AS A WHOLE ACHIEVED A VERY HIGH LEVEL OF OBFUSCATION, WHICH WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE INTENTION. LYNCH IS A SHREWD AND EXPERIENCED LEADER WHO HAD NO INTENTION OF COMMITTING HIMSELF TO MUCH OF ANYTHING IN THE SECOND DAY OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. RENDAHL

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